

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY INR/RNA: AAVACCARO/CFJONES

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EXDIS, TOSEC 320

E.O. 11652: GDS NO FOREIGN DISSEM

TAGS: PFOR, XF, MO

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF RABAT SUMMIT ACTION ON
PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION ISSUE

FOLLOWING IS INR RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR ASSESSMENT IN
SECTO 209. ASSESSMENT BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AS OF
1700 EST, OCTOBER 29.

1. AS ANNOUNCED BY ARAB LEAGUE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL
SAYYID NAWFAL, SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS ON OCTOBER 28:

--(A) UNANIMOUSLY ENDORSED PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO RETURN TO
THEIR HOMELAND, DETERMINE THEIR FUTURE, AND ESTABLISH AN
INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY ON ANY LIBERATED PALESTINIAN TERRI-
TORY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PLO;

--(B) SAID THAT AS SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, THE PLO SHALL RECEIVE THE ARAB STATES'
SUPPORT IN CARRYING OUT ITS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
RESPONSIBILITIES;

--(C) CALLED ON JORDAN, SYRIA, EGYPT, AND THE PLO "TO LAY
DOWN A FORMULA ORGANIZING RELATIONS AMONG THEM IN LIGHT OF
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THESE DECISIONS AND FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR IMPLEMENTATION."

2. THIS DECISION IS A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY FOR THE PLO, BUT THE ARABS MAY MANAGE TO PRESERVE THE CHERISHED IMAGE OF ARAB SOLIDARITY (RABAT'S 5263) BY PREVAILING ON HUSAYN TO LIVE WITH THIS NEW SITUATION AND ON 'ARAFAT TO ADOPT A MAGNANIMOUS POSTURE TOWARD HUSAYN. A TRUCE BETWEEN BITTER ENEMIES HAS PRECEDENTS IN ARAB HISTORY--NOTABLY THE REUNION BETWEEN NASSER AND HUSAYN JUST BEFORE THE 1967 WAR. SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT MAY WELL HAVE ENOUGH FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE, RESPECTIVELY, WITH JORDAN AND THE PLO TO PREVAIL ON 'ARAFAT TO BE GRACIOUS IN VICTORY AND ON HUSAYN TO BOW TO THE INEVITABLE.

3. WITH ALL THE RETURNS NOT YET IN, WE CANNOT PROVIDE A DEFINITIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SUMMIT OR DETERMINE THE PRECISE ROLE THAT THE SUMMITEERS CONTEMPLATE FOR JORDAN AND THE PLO IN ANY FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL.

4. THE SPECIFIC ROLES OF JORDAN AND THE PLO IN ANY ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN EXPLAINED, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE SUMMIT ITSELF HAS NOT YET FACED UP TO THIS ISSUE. NEVERTHELESS, THE SUMMIT'S CALL ON THE FOUR INTERESTED PARTIES TO "LAY DOWN A FORMULA" IS REMINISCENT OF THE REPORT IN PRESS AND ELSEWHERE THAT THE ARABS ENVISAGE A QUADRIPARTITE DELEGATION TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL. WHO WOULD ACTUALLY DO THE NEGOTIATING UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IS NOT CLEAR. WE BELIEVE THAT THE QUADRI-PARTITE DEVICE IS INTENDED AS A SOP TO JORDAN, AND THAT, IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL ON THE WEST BANK, THE PLO WOULD BE THE ARAB PARTY.

5. IN ANY EVENT, WHETHER ANY OTHER DELEGATION ACTS AS INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN THE PLO AND ISRAEL WOULD APPEAR TO BE ACADEMIC, SINCE ISRAEL'S PRESENT OBJECTION TO A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK WOULD APPEAR TO RULE OUT ARAB-ISRAEL NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS ISSUE WHOEVER DOES THE NEGOTIATING. IN FACT, THERE HAS BEEN SOME SUGGESTION FROM JORDANIAN SOURCES THAT PLO INSISTENCE ON REPRESENTING THE PALESTINIANS AT GENEVA IS A STRATAGEM TO TORPEDO THE NEGOTIATIONS.

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6. WE DO NOT READ THE PLO'S POSITION THIS WAY. WE BELIEVE, RATHER, THAT IT IS MORE ACCURATE TO VIEW IT AS DETERMINATION TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS EVEN AT THE RISK OF TORPEDOING NEGOTIATIONS. THERE IS RAPIDLY GROWING EXPECTATION THAT THE PLO'S CONCATENATION OF POLITICAL SUCCESSES WILL CULMINATE WITHIN WEEKS--IF NOT DAYS--IN THE PROCLAMATION OF A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE. SUCH

A STEP WOULD APPEAR CONSISTENT WITH A CAMPAIGN TO RECOVER PALESTINIAN TERRITORY BY DIPLOMATIC ACTION.

7. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT, IN SUPPORTING THE PLO, THE SUMMIT INTENDED TO WRITE OFF NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL, BUT RATHER THAT THE ARABS, CONSIDERING AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ESSENTIAL, ARE COUNTING ON THE US TO CONVINCE ISRAEL OF THE NECESSITY OF DEALING WITH THE PLO.

8. AS INDICATED IN PARAGRAPH 7 OF RABAT 5263, SOME ARAB OPINION IS HOPEFUL THAT ISRAEL WILL COME AROUND TO DEALING WITH THE PLO BEFORE MANY MORE YEARS. THIS THESIS WOULD IMPLY FREEZING THE WEST BANK ISSUE IN THE INTERIM. IT IS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT FAYSAL WOULD ACCEPT SO LEISURELY A TIMETABLE, AND IT SEEMS THAT SYRIA AND EGYPT CONTINUE TO PERCEIVE URGENCY IN THE MATTER OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM GOLAN AND SINAI.

9. AVAILABLE REPORTING DOES NOT INDICATE WHETHER THE SUMMIT HAS DEALT WITH THE MODALITIES OF THE NEXT NEGOTIATING STAGE OR WILL LEAVE THIS OVERALL QUESTION TO SOME FUTURE FORUM SUCH AS THE ALGIERS MINI-SUMMIT SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 1.

10. ACCORDING TO A REUTER REPORT JUST IN, THE SUMMIT LEADERS TODAY AGREED TO SCALE DOWN A SYRIAN PROPOSAL TO AMASS A WAR CHEST OF 13 BILLION DOLS. INSTEAD, EGYPT, JORDAN, SYRIA, AND THE PLO ALTOGETHER WILL RECEIVE 2.35 BILLION DOLS. ANNUALLY TO BUILD UP THEIR ARMED FORCES. INGERSOLL

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